R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 020 869 RE 001 363

ECLECTIC READING INSTRUCTION FOR PRIMARY GRADE SUCCESS.

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PUB DATE APR 68

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.44 9P.

DESCRIPTORS- *READING INSTRUCTION, *BASIC READING, *PRIMARY GRADES, *TEACHING METHODS, READING MATERIALS, READING READINESS, AUDITORY PERCEPTION, VISUAL PERCEPTION, TACTUAL PERCEPTION, TEACHING TECHNIQUES, READING DIAGNOSIS,

ANY ECLECTIC READING PROGRAM MUST BE BASED ON (1) AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THE TACTILE, AUDITORY, AND VISUAL SYSTEMS DEVELOP IN EACH CHILD, (2) A KNOWLEDGE OF THE AVAILABLE AND USABLE READING APPROACHES, AND (3) AN ASSESSMENT OF THE COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES. INDIVIDUAL DIAGNOSIS AND TRAINING IS MANDATORY. A VISUAL DISCRIMINATION PROGRAM OF DIFFERENTIATING AMONG LETTER FORMS AND AN AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION PROGRAM STRESSING LETTER NAMES AND SOUNDS CONSTITUTE THE MOST EFFICIENT READING READINESS PROGRAM. A TACTILE LEARNING SYSTEM REFINES AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION SKILLS. THE EFFECTIVE READING TEACHER IS ONE WHO USES DIAGNOSTIC EVIDENCE AS A DEVELOPMENTAL METHOD, INDIVIDUALIZING THE USE OF MATERIALS TO IMPROVE SPECIFIC READING SKILL AREAS. SEVEN MAJOR APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING OF READING ARE LISTED--DEVELOPMENTAL, PHONIC, LINGUISTIC, LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE, ORTHOGRAPHIC STRESS, INDIVIDUALIZED-LIBRARY, AND SPECIAL. THEIR TEACHING SYSTEMS OR PHILOSOPHIES ARE DESCRIBED. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE (BOSTON, APRIL 24-27, 1968). (BS)

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Eclectic, from the Greek, "eklektikos" meaning selecting what appears to be best in various doctrines, methods, or styles; composed of elements drawn from various sources.

There are at least three areas which must be discussed in any presentation regarding eclectic methods of primary grade reading instruction. You will note even in these introductory remarks that we speak of eclectic methods since quite simply the various language skills of various children, the available reading curriculum materials and the instructional capabilities of various teachers will determine the specific eclectic methods to be employed for optimum reading achievement for each individual child.

The three areas of concern, then:

1. An understanding, or at least an attempt to understand how three learning systems (tactile, auditory, visual) develop in each individual child to that sophisticated level where meaning can be conveyed by written symbols.

2. An understanding of the available and usable reading approaches, that is those philosophical and psychological foundations for reading instruction and teacher knowledge of the various reading <u>systems</u> meaning those extant curriculum materials and teachers guides used in teaching children to read.

3. The third area of concern is the most complex of the three, assessment of the components of effective instructional technique; those specific and quite unique teacher behaviors which provide the means whereby children learn to read.

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There are three learning systems or neurological systems, if you will, which man utilizes for learning, the tactile, the auditory, and the visual systems. The extent of what man can learn and the sophistication of the concepts which man can understand, is determined by the neurological mode or neurological modes of learning that man utilizes in the learning process and the degree to which he is dependent upon these neurological modalities.

Except for persons who are severly handicapped by physiological or neurological dys function, the haptic, tactile, or kinesthetic neurological system is the least refined and the most confining both quantitative and qualitative in terms of what man can learn. This learning system is, however, a most important learning mode in the early years prior to formal school experiences, and more than likely a most efficient learning modality in the initial phases of reading instruction. Though it is premature to discuss the use of the tactile system in initial reading instruction, let me indicate at this point that much of the reading disability, a much higher percentage than we suspect, is probably due to insufficient and inefficient use of the tactile modality in learning to read.

The auditory system is a more sophisticated learning system and for many pupils in our school population, it provides the only available means whereby we can teach the pupil those necessary skills and social attitudes for successful adjustment to society. I'm talking here, of course, about the significant number of pupils who do fail to learn to read in our schools. For such children and young adults what they hear and what they casually observe provides stimuli for subsequent social behaviors. The tragic consequences of failure to learn to read, and failure to succeed in school has manifested itself so often during our "long hot summers" that topic needs little elaboration.

The most sophisticated and refined learning system is the visual system and reading is the most elaborate process whereby information can be gathered, can be critically analyzed and ultimately can be influencing on the intellectual and social development of the individual.

Fortunately, but unfortunately, for teachers of reading these learning systems do not mature at the same rate for all children nor obviously do all children present themselves to the first grade teacher with the same level of perceptual skill in the three learning systems. The fact of individual differences with respect to the sophistication of the three sensory systems is obviously apparent at the first instance of failure in the first formal learning activity.

Out of this knowledge of individual differences with regard to the relative refinements of these learning systems and because of our concern for the "whole child", the professional component in many instances developed kindergarten programs which pay no heed whatever to the fact that such learning differences exist. We have similarly developed some rather extensive language and reading readiness programs of the uniform instruction variety requiring all pupils in the classroom to participate for the greater good of something called social development. If kindergartens exist not only to provide desirable social experiences, but also to refine the neurological systems through readiness skill activities so that the skill of reading can be learned at some point in time, then the grouping of kindergarten pupils and other instructional adjustments must be made if we are to individualize beginning reading instruction.

As a profession, we are just beginning to appreciate the relationship which exists betweeen neurological system development and reading/language readiness and formal programs. Unfortunately, most of the articles dealing with the neurological aspects of reading instruction relate bizarre diagnostic protocols and exotic readiness developmental and/or remedial reading methods. These "interesting" solutions to the reading and language problems we have in our schools are generally sensationalized to the point of parent hysteria: consequent pressure on the schools to provide tumbling mats, trampolines, and whirling mobiles and a general feeling of inadequency on the part of classroom teachers.

The causes of reading disability are rarely neurologically based. Most neurologists, opthalmologists, otoloryngologists and pediatricians would place the figure at less than three percent of the total number of reading failures in our schools. Again, unfortunately, most of the so-called neurological diagnosis is effected by individuals who by training, experiences and motive are least qualified to determine such causal relationships.

What is the degree of neurological involvement in learning to read? The two learning systems most initimately involved in this learning process are the visual system and the auditory system. These two systems must operate in a syncronized manner if efficient reading is to occur.

What is the act of reading? Reading is the accommodation of a learned set of visual symbols (graphemes) to an already established auditory set (phonemes). Basically it's a "fitting" process.

What level of neurological sophistication, visual and auditory, is essential for beginning reading instruction? That level at which the child is attentive and persistent with the receptor senses specifically the eye and ear.

What reading readiness activities, therefore, best develop these attention and persistence skills? To my mind, a visual discrimination program of differentiating among letter forms and an auditory discrimination program stressing letter names and sounds is, more than likely, the most efficient reading readiness program.

There is obviously more to an eclectic reading readiness program than learning letter names and sounds, but the research evidence of The United States Office of Education Cooperative First Grade Research Project, is clear and incontrovertible on this point. Knowledge of letter names is the single best predictor of success in reading in grade one. The second best predictor is phoneme knowledge, or pupil skill in identifying the separate sounds in spoken words. I have said on previous occasions and repeat here; I am not certain that letter knowledge is causative of reading success, I am however, more than reasonably convinced.

The neurological implications related to readiness programs are not as complicated nor involved as some have tended to make them. Indeed, it is both fashionable as well as time consuming to develop an elaborate vocabulary to disguise the relatively simply causes of reading disability. The fact of the matter is that in the majority of so called learning/reading clinics too much time has been spent in medical/neurological treatises of dubious relevance and toolittle time in developing specific instructional materials for specific educational problems. There frankly is too much vertical and too few direct pupil - teacher instructional activities of the skill variety. There are excellent readiness programs of the letter knowledge variety commercially available and if pressed I'll name a few. These programs should be energetically and intensively used in developing pupil attention and persistence abilities in both the visual and auditory areas through the utilization of the tactile modality.

By far, the major causes of reading disabilities in the primary grades are of the attention and persistence variety. More simply a pupil who fails to learn to read, fails because he cannot accommodate the oral word recognition instruction of the teacher to the lexical item or word he is supposed to be observing and generally it is a he.

In too many instances there is too much oral interference by the teacher, too much time is spent in presenting unnecessary word meaning the pupil already knows or in verbalizing other meanings which have little relevance to the context of the story content. Conversly, little or no time is spent requiring the pupil to tactily respond to either oral or visual stimuli. I am strongly suggesting that in order to refine auditory discrimination skills of those children with inferior skills it may be necessary, it certainly is most desirable to utilize the tactile learning system. If the tactile system is not employed, the pupil may not be attentive nor persistent and may not learn the correspondences between the printed and spoken forms of the same lexical item. All of the most widely used reading systems utilize

only the visual and auditory learning modes. What seems to be needed, and especially by boys in beginning reading activities is a tactile-auditory-visual mode.

The intensity of dependence on any inferior learning system is conditioned by the level of sophistication of a superior system.

Eclectic methods of beginning reading instruction must obviously, be diagnostically based. Readiness tests of the standardized variety and other measures of perceptual development when sensitively administered and intelligently analyzed will provide the most favorable neurological base for an eclectic beginning reading program. How much phonics instruction for Jimmie? Or Tommie? Or Mary? How much dependence on a visual memory oriented, developmental approach for Joan or Clifford? How much utilization of the tactile system in developing effective visual and auditory discrimination skills? These questions can be answered and they must be answered if we are to improve the quality of our reading instructions.

The Fifth Perspective Conference Proceedings of the International Reading Association will provide an excellent background for those teachers and reading specialists who wish to be informed with respect to the various approaches through which reading as a skill subject can be taught.

There persists, I think, some confusion within the profession when we begin to talk about the matter of reading method. We must first appreciate the fact that there are different approaches to the teaching of reading; that is differing philosophical points of view with relation to how reading should be taught. There are seven major approaches to the teaching of reading in the elementary school:

Developmental approach
Phonic approach
Linguistic approach
Language Experience approach
Orthographic Stress approach
Individualized-Library approach
Special approach

Each of these approaches provides a category within which we find many systems. For example, within the Developmental approach we find the Scott Foresman system, the Ginn system, the Houghton-Mifflin system, etc. In both scope and sequence of skills to be taught, these systems are reasonably similar.

The phonics approach could be represented by such systems as the Phonetic Key System, the Open Court System, and the Garden System.

The Lippincott materials, the McGraw-Hill materials and the Barnhart-Bloomfield materials would be representative of linguistic systems.

The Language Experience approach would include the following points of view with regard to reading instruction, since the system itself based on the language of the pupils to be taught precludes prescriptive, or commercially developed materials.

The points of view of R. Van Allen, of Dr. Russell Stauffer, of Dr. Donald Cleland would be representative of the language experience approach.

Words in color, ITA and the various diacritical marking systems would be included in the Orthographic Stress approach.

The Individualized-Library approach would, as with the Language-Experience approach be represented by points of view rather than commercially available systems. The procedures advocated by Professor Patrick Groff, by Professor Jeanette Veatch, and by Dr. Willard C. Olsen would represent the general framework for individualized-library systems.

These special systems would include such systems as the Braille system, the Gillingham system and the Honeywell-University of Minnesota system for teaching deaf children.

It is clear then from the few system examples listed that there are many approaches to beginning instruction and many more systems within each approach. To talk about eclectic method implies familiarity with both available approaches and usable systems.

Another major conclusion of the United States Office of Education Cooperative First Grade Research Project was that there were greater variations in pupil achievements between the highest achieving classroom and the lowest achieving classroom in any one reading system evaluated, than there were among the highest achieving classrooms of all the reading systems evaluated. Even where factors of intelligence, socio-economic background and readiness abilities were taken into account, these wide variations within reading systems continued to be apparent. Obviously, differences in certain teacher competencies were causing these differences in pupil scores. This conclusion leads us to a discussion of the most complex factor in developing eclectic reading programs. The teacher, and that very unique interaction that occurs when <u>this</u> particular teacher interacts with these particular children utilizing instructional materials from this, that, these, and those particular reading systems.

There has been much discussion, little research and no conclusive evidence regarding factors related to teaching effectiveness. Neither age, sex, experience, formal education, attitude personality, nor marital status bears an universal positive correlation with teaching success. We have no available valid and reliable measures of the quality of instructional service in reading. Many supervisory personnel assess, teacher effectiveness by an evaluation of three questionable evaluative factors; pupil control, physical appearance of the classroom, and physical appearance and speech of the teacher. I am aware of no research which indicates that any of these factors bears any relationship to effective teaching. Apparently some quite unique instructional modifications made by individual classroom teachers accounts for the reading success or failure of pupils in particular classrooms throughout the nation.

Admitting this paucity of research evidence on the matter of teacher effectiveness in reading and realizing that the remarks which follow are but opinion tempered by experience, I should like to present four instructional modifications which to my mind indentify the effective eclectic teacher of reading from the ineffective teacher of reading.

1. Eclectic teaching of reading occurs when diagnosis of pupil deficiencies in reading is understood as developmental method.

2. Eclectic teaching of reading occurs when there is systematic oral reading for diagnosis conducted daily in beginning reading programs and regular periods of oral reading for diagnosis conducted for pupils experiencing word recognition difficulties in upper primary or intermediate grades.

3. Eclectic teaching of reading occurs when the classroom teacher utilizes instructional material from materials by skill category and provides intensive instruction utilizing such materials at the first instance of pupil failure or better prior to an anticipated failure.

4. Eclectic teaching of reading occurs when the classroom teacher utilizes programmed type materials to intensify pupil practices in specific reading skill areas.

There are major obstacles to the design of truly effective eclectic type reading programs which will insure that every child who comes to school will learn to read. There are many challenges which face us as a profession upon whose shoulders the destiny of this republic rests so heavily.

As a profession we have endured much public criticism. Each of us, individually question our intellectual capacities. Each of us feel the emotional frustrations of continuing pupil failure in our schools. Each of us clearly understand our problems and all of us are dedicated to their ultimate solution; no other institutional profession seeks to accomplish higher goals than ours.